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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Saturday 22 April 1978 CG NIDC 78/094C

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Saturday, 22 April 1978.

The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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ETHIOPIA: Mengistu Visits Cuba

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[] //Ethiopian Chairman Mengistu arrived in Cuba yesterday on a highly publicized official visit. The Eritrean problem will probably be the main topic of discussion; the Cubans are unlikely to agree to assume a major role in the fighting for the time being.//

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[] //Despite his failure during his recent visit to Moscow to win Soviet and Cuban support for an all-out military push against the Eritreans, Mengistu may make a direct appeal to President Castro for Cuban combat assistance against the separatists. Cuba, however, is unlikely to accede to such an appeal, recognizing that any major Cuban involvement would be impossible without Soviet support.//

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[] //Castro will probably say that Cuba has not abandoned Ethiopia and promise full Cuban support if the insurgents do not agree to a negotiated settlement or if the Ethiopians are incapable of imposing a military solution on their own. He will probably point out that international criticism will be at least partially deflated if the Cubans can assert that their involvement came only after all other alternatives were exhausted.//

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[] //The Cubans seem intent on giving Mengistu an effusive welcome during his visit. Cuban media have been giving massive publicity to the trip, and large crowds will probably turn out at all of Mengistu's public appearances.//

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[] //Castro may try to mediate the Eritrean problem during Mengistu's visit. Delegations from the Eritrean Liberation Front and the Marxist Eritrean People's Liberation Front--the two largest of the three guerrilla factions--may be in Havana at the same time as Mengistu.//

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[] The delegations may be visiting Cuba in connection with preparations for the World Youth Festival to be held in Havana in July. Mengistu and the guerrillas would probably prefer to avoid talking to each other directly but might let the Cubans act as a go-between.

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[] //Any significant progress toward a negotiated settlement in Eritrea is unlikely. Mengistu and the Eritreans

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will probably continue to press their maximum demands--the Ethiopians want full sovereignty over the province; the guerrillas demand independence.//

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[] //Cuban and Soviet mediation efforts, however, are likely to continue. While contacts have been established with all three guerrilla factions, Moscow and Havana are likely to focus on a separate peace agreement with the EPLF by stressing its ideological affinity with the Mengistu regime.//

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[] A Soviet Foreign Ministry official told US diplomats this week that Moscow pressed Mengistu during his trip to Moscow to agree to a negotiated settlement that would provide some form of autonomy for Eritrea. Mengistu reportedly rejected this approach. []

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CHINA - NORTH KOREA: Relations

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[] A recent exchange in the Chinese and the North Korean press suggests that Peking is having some difficulty balancing its support for Kim Il-sung with its desire to preserve the status quo on the Korean peninsula. Pursuit of this balancing act may have caused some strain in Chinese - North Korean relations.

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[] On 28 March, the Pyongyang *Nodong Sinmun* published a scathing attack on US policy toward Korea, denouncing plans for the gradual withdrawal of US ground forces and the simultaneous strengthening of the South Korean armed forces. The article, which broadened into an attack on "US imperialism," culminated in a series of foreign policy maxims that present a striking contrast to the current basis of China's foreign policy.

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[] The view expounded in the article is that the "world people" should unite in an anti-US struggle, that "US imperialists" are the primary target of the struggle; and that countries and peoples should be judged by their attitude toward US imperialism. This is an issue, the article contends, that "no one can ignore or escape."

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[] Peking's view, on the other hand, is that the USSR is the "main enemy" of the nations and peoples of the world and that all nations, including the US, should unite in the struggle to oppose Soviet expansionism.

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[] Peking initially chose to handle these contradictions by publicly ignoring them. In summarizing the North Korean article, Chinese media repeated many of the harsh criticisms aimed at Washington but omitted the maxims that contradicted Peking's own foreign policy.

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[] Three days after publication of the North Korean article, however, the Chinese again set forth their view of the USSR as the major threat in an article that castigated Moscow as the latest "international gendarme," a role taken over from the US. That the Chinese article probably was intended as a reply to the North Koreans is suggested by its focus on the term "international gendarme," one of the appellations given the US in the North Korean article.

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[] Signs such as the Pyongyang article of Kim Il-song's frustration over the unwillingness of either China or the USSR to change the situation on the Korean peninsula are hardly new. China has typically chosen to deal with this kind of public sulking by ignoring it, but in this case the implied criticism of Peking's policy apparently induced the Chinese to reply in kind.

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[] China has little interest, however, in allowing this kind of public exchange to continue. The Chinese remain alert to the possibility that Kim might choose to redress his present "tilt" toward China by improving relations with Moscow. In recent months there have indeed been more frequent and higher level contacts between Moscow and Pyongyang. Last January, Politburo member Kunayev visited North Korea in the first such trip by a Soviet leader of that party rank in over six years.

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[] In this regard, we have received reports suggesting that Chinese Premier Hua Kuo-feng is planning a visit to North Korea that would give Peking an opportunity to try to calm the troubled waters in Pyongyang. Hua, however, will almost certainly encounter probing requests for higher levels of political support for North Korean reunification objectives and for greater economic aid that China will be reluctant to meet. Pyongyang's decision to air its criticism of Chinese policy publicly may in fact have been designed to set this kind of agenda for a Hua visit. []

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PORTUGAL-AZORES: Separatists

25X1 [] Two recent episodes of separatist-inspired violence in the Azores may presage a stepped-up campaign by the Azorean Liberation Front. Few Azoreans openly support the Front now, and independence is not a popular theme in the islands. Azorean support for the separatists could grow rapidly, however, if Lisbon reacts too harshly to separatist challenges or moves too slowly in the intermittent negotiations on Azorean autonomy.

25X1 [] Portugal's Deputy Prime Minister Almeida Santos was slightly injured last week when separatist organizers apparently lost control of a group of about 200 demonstrators gathered to protest the Minister's attitudes on regional autonomy. Although unplanned, the assault was touted by the Front as a symbol of Azorean contempt for Lisbon's authority and of the strength of pressures for independence. A clash with riot police five days later played upon widespread Azorean resentment of Portugal's use of mainland police without consulting regional authorities.

25X1 [] //The violence could mark the early stages of an antigovernment campaign announced in mid-March by Front leader Jose de Almeida. [] Almeida and his associates have traveled extensively to drum up international political and economic support. Almeida is making the dubious claim that the Liberation Front is well armed.//

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[] Almeida faces an uphill battle. His support seems generally limited to the island of Sao Miguel, the richest and most progressive in the archipelago. The reception given Almeida Santos in other islands following the demonstration, moreover, indicates that most Azoreans remain loyal to the mainland. Officials of the regional government, who are the dominant political force in the islands, have repudiated Almeida and the recent incidents.

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[] Lisbon's ability to hold on to the islands is largely dependent on its willingness to offer the Azoreans a fair degree of political and economic autonomy, but separatist violence tends to stymie progress in the autonomy negotiations. Indeed, Almeida's strategy of constant provocation is aimed at inducing Lisbon to take highhanded measures that will galvanize popular support behind his movement. Much stronger measures than those taken recently, however, would probably be required before the Azorean population in general rebelled against the regime.

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ISRAEL: Gush Emunim Rallies

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[] Religious Gush Emunim extremists are planning to hold two progovernment rallies on the West Bank on Monday. Israeli Prime Minister Begin will attend, indicating that he and Gush leaders have quietly healed the rift created by his self-rule proposal for the West Bank, which the Gush Emunim feared might lead to the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

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[] The mass meetings are timed to coincide with the celebration of Passover in Israel, and Gush leaders have used a mixture of religious and political appeals in hopes of drawing large holiday crowds. They are planning a walk, for example, from the settlement Kiryat Arba to the Tomb of the Patriarchs in nearby Hebron on the West Bank, followed by a meeting in front of the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

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[] The ostensible object will be to celebrate the reestablishment of a Jewish quarter in Hebron, but the Gush Emunim will stress opposition to US pressure and to faintheartedness at home. One Gush handout singles out the "Peace Now" movement and accuses it of helping Israel's enemies and aiding Egyptian President Sadat.

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[] The Gush's change of attitude toward Begin has also been reflected in its apparent willingness to go along with the government's de facto freeze on the creation of new settlements. According to one Israeli press report, the government and Gush Emunim have decided to work on increasing the number of settlers in existing sites on the West Bank, at least through the end of this summer, rather than plan additional settlements.

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USSR: Conditions for Winter Grains

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[] //The USSR's fall-sown grains--normally one-third of the total grain crop--apparently suffered only slightly more than usual winterkill this year. Recent localized freezes may have moderately reduced yield potential in some parts of the winter grain area. On balance, prospects for winter grains appear favorable. The Soviets have begun purchasing US grains under the long-term grain agreement.//

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[] We estimate that 8 million to 9 million hectares of the 38.5 million hectares planted last fall were lost as a result of poor conditions at seeding or adverse winter weather. Although this loss is slightly above average, it does not necessarily preclude a good winter grain crop. If growing conditions are favorable from now until harvest, higher yields could offset the lost area.

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[] Last year, the USSR harvested a near-record winter grain crop of 63.4 million tons, despite an even larger area lost to winterkill than we expect this year. Moreover, winter-killed areas will be resown, largely with spring barley.

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[] The Soviets have been more explicit this year than in the past about damage to winter gains. In early January, a Ukrainian official remarked that 1.5 million hectares of winter grain in the Ukraine would have to be replanted. *Izvestiya* reported last month that 14 percent, an estimated 1.5 million to 2 million hectares, had been damaged in the central and southern Ukraine. A Belorussian newspaper on 1 April referred to serious crop problems there but gave no details.

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[] At this stage of the crop season, winter grain prospects are influenced chiefly by weather conditions that affect the yield potential of the surviving plants. A sudden freeze

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in late March may have caused some problems in the northern Ukraine, but the effects should not be severe. Freezes early this month were more widespread and may reduce somewhat the yields in some areas of the northern and central Ukraine.

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[] It is still too early to forecast total grain production. Within the next few weeks, meteorological data, [] and field reports from the US agricultural attache in Moscow will allow a more complete assessment of the winter grain crop. Spring grains are only now beginning to be planted.

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[] The USSR has started purchasing US grain--250,000 tons of corn for delivery after 1 October--and Canadian Wheat Board representatives are apparently about to close a substantial sale of grain for delivery after September. We believe that, during the current 12-month period of the US-Soviet grain agreement, the Soviets have spent about \$2.7 billion in hard currency for 24 million tons of grain, 15 million of US origin.

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